

Recommendations for site visits organised by FEANTSA or its member organisations

The aim of this document is to ensure that site visits are informative, respectful, and impactful in their preparation and implementation. Local organisations hosting the site visit should adapt these recommendations to their reality and needs. The following recommendations should be complementary to any existing guidelines or principles from services.

Considerations for organisations

Purpose

- The site visit should have a clear educational purpose, rather than being a mere display. For example, it may aim to help participants understand the challenges faced in a particular context, to share a good practice, or to foster genuine exchange among participants.
- Site visits may also aim to enhance international cooperation or increase the visibility or advocacy work of the host organisation.

Content of the visit

- Common areas and office spaces should be prioritised during the visit. Bedrooms or individual apartments should be avoided unless necessary for specific educational purposes.
- To respect the right to privacy of service users, visits should be organised when they are not present or during off-peak hours. If they are present, they should be fully informed and consenting to participate, their needs respected, and they should retain the right to choose not to participate at any moment.
- As a rule, service users under eighteen years old should not be present during the visit, given the difficulty of assessing informed consent from minors. Organisations may consider the participation of adolescents only if they play an active role fitting in the educational purpose of the visit and if protective measures are in place.
- Materials explaining the support provided, especially if prepared by service users (with consent and anonymity), may be included as part of the site visit where relevant.
- If possible, time and space should be allocated for discussion and exchange among visitors and between visitors and the host organisation.

Procedures

- Visitors should be informed with sufficient notice about the logistical aspects of the visit (how to get there, duration of the visit, etc.), as well as the content-related elements (what is visited and why, any suggestions or considerations during the visit, etc.).
- Any relevant ethical guidelines or confidentiality agreements should be shared with visitors in advance, either verbally or in written form.
- If the site visit is co-ordinated by an organisation different from the service to be visited, a preparatory meeting should take place to review the details of the visit and to ensure that the recommendations in this document, or any others, are followed.
- It is recommended to allocate some time to get to know the visitors before the visit, preferably in small groups.

Role of people using or living in the service

- As a minimum, service users should be asked for their opinion about the visit or informed that it will take place, with sufficient notice.
- Service users, experts by experience and/or peer workers should be involved in the preparation of the site visit and, if they wish, in its delivery. Their collaboration and guidance in navigating services should be valued and prioritised, ensuring their voices are heard and respected throughout the process.
- When asking service users about their possible participation, the positive contribution of lived experience should be emphasised, rather than a passive or symbolic presence.
- If they agree to participate in the visit, service users may provide a valuable contribution by offering insights into their lived experience or by leading the visit. Where possible, their participation should be recognised with remuneration in acknowledgement of their expertise.

Considerations for visitors

- Visitors should be informed, or should actively seek information, about the service they will visit. They should remain open-minded about a service which may differ significantly from their local context.
- As a rule, taking videos or pictures during the visit should not be allowed unless there is specific consent.
- If service users are present during the visit, visitors should act normally around them so as not to make anyone feel uncomfortable in their own space.
- Visitors should avoid sharing any personal information about service users or staff online or elsewhere without express permission.
- Personal space and boundaries should be respected at all times.
- Visitors should avoid making any negative comments about the service or the premises during the visit, especially if service users are present.
- Visitors should arrive on time to the meeting point.